

## Grimwald's thoughts part 59

After our encounter with the Vrock we decided to head for cover as soon as possible. Felina and Nethander went to scout ahead so we don't run into an ambush. After a few hours I spot a lone silhouette on the crest of a hill. Hardly a professional ambush or scout and very odd. Cuura decides to ride out to investigate and it turns to be Jay who is looking for us because he thinks Reeds premonition means he is needed. Good thing I saw him or else he would have wandered past us.

We find a well hidden spot at the wood's edge and set up camp. According to our new "friend" the demon could either have been a bound servant of the red wizards or part of a demonic horde. He tells us devils can integrate within existing structures, but demons have the need to bully smaller beings and so are seldom alone. They prefer gating in lesser demons to bully. Why would demons be looking for the thing in the chest though? Still this is the second time a demon came after us...

Jay wakes me up in the middle of the night. He can't see here in the darkness under the trees so he needs me to be his eyes. We hear some sniffing and shuffling just beyond my view. We decide to rouse Cuura as well. Then I see something abhorrently twisted, lots of mismatched teeth, a skin which is part fur, part scales and it is tracking our scent. It scampers about at the edge of my dark vision sniffing the leaves and branches. It reminds me of various creatures, perhaps it is a magical construct? Then we hear shuffling behind us. We are surrounded. We grab our bows and Jay takes out his *continual flame* and we open fire.

We drop one of them but the others charge us from all sides. Then suddenly we hear the wail of unfathomable misery and the stench of putrefying flesh mixed with sulfur is in our mouths and noses. This revolting combination is enough to break lesser men and our mage doubles up and starts barfing his dinner out. Fortunately his doubling up on the floor causes the beasts to ignore him. I see Cuura go tense for a moment and then she releases her tension by charging ahead, Jay is turning green, which I quickly cure with a resurgence. As we battle the beasts which look like dire wolf/scorpion crossbreeds out of the darkness appears a moaning, gibbering mass of gray, slimy Dretches seemingly endless rows come forth from the darkness.

Cuura's strength is enough to overcome their resistance to weapons not forged from cold iron as are Jays special moves and my cold iron Urgosh. Cuura is quickly surrounded and beset on all sides by demons vehemently wishing to share their torment. Jay draws Dretches away from me. Due to his mobile fighting style they cannot pin him down and barely manage to strike out at him but enough of them get through to make me wish I had my armor. We battle furiously and although we are being worn down we also slay half a dozen of these lesser demons. Without the power of stone and healing prayers they would have killed me thrice already!

Then the ones not fighting us set up a chant and their numbers are replenished. Gods! They multiply faster than orcs!!! I now understand the phrase "the endless hordes of the Abyss". Jay will probably manage to chip this horde down to nothing by himself, but Cuura and I won't be around to see it. Where are the other four members of our group? Then I sense a power building behind me, another chant starts, and more than half of the Dretches fall apart. Apparently our mage has recovered.

Cuura senses victory and tries to push towards the chief demon, but is held back by the remaining Dretches. Acid and fire lances into the mob and burns away most remaining Dretches. Then a terrifying creature steps forth he is wreathed in flame and his flesh is melting of his bones wielding a flame tongue blade. Cuura charges the enemy captain, but as her flail strikes his fire flares up and she barely manages to escape the searing riposte. Jay meanwhile is rediscovering his dinner and I am still clearing away the lesser demons besetting me. Cuura for all her defiance is at death's door. The fiend raises his flame tongue and then seems to recoil in on himself. I notice our mage stepping forward chanting in what must be celestial and tossing holy water and soothing herbs. The demon loses this contest of wills and is driven back to the Abyss by our new mage. The few lesser demons scatter as soon as they see their master overcome and we are in no shape to give chase.